

REMARKS

Claim 12 corresponds to claim 1 as rejected with the addition that the shape of the blank is substantially maintained by carrying out the steps. Basis for this amendment can be found in the description and in Figures 1 and 2.

U.S. Patent 5,262,123 (Thomas '123) discloses a process of forming or reforming a composite material which comprises relatively rotating a pair of members while urging them together under pressure so as to mix or remix the materials together. The composite is then extruded (see *e.g.* abstract). In contrast to the Thomas '123 reference, in the present method, the blank is not extruded. The material is not even molten.

In particular, the Thomas '123 invention is based on a friction welding technique, where heat is generated by rotation and compression of the material to be reformed. The heated and molten material is then extruded through an orifice.

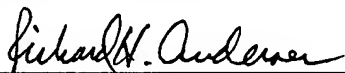
In contrast, in the present method, the blank shall substantially maintain its shape, and therefore, heat is generated by an external means. The blank is not extruded through an orifice. In the present method, consolidation occurs by phase transformation and recrystallization of the material exclusively in the solid state.

It is submitted that all claims are now of proper form and scope for allowance. Early and favorable consideration is respectfully requested.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 13-2855, under Order No. 30572/40755 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Dated: March 21, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

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